

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

October 27, 2009

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Improving Student Achievement Through the Math for All (M4A) Initiative

ORIGINATOR: J. Bidulock, Assistant Superintendent

RESOURCE
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INFORMATION

The 2008-09 Provincial Achievement Test results were identified as an issue in the District's Accountability Pillar results. The overall achievement at the acceptable standard was deemed a concern. In looking at the results for individual tests, it was noted that the acceptable standard for Grade 3 Mathematics was a concern, the acceptable standard for Grade 6 and Grade 9 Mathematics were an issue. These results, coupled with the initial implementation of the revised Mathematics Program of Studies for K-12, prompted the District to support a three-year initiative, called Math for All (M4A) to improve mathematics teaching in Grades K-9. The M4A initiative was made possible through the realignment of current district resources and external support through Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium. This allowed the initiative to be implemented at no cost to schools.

The intent of M4A is to provide wrap-around support to as many teachers and principals as possible during the implementation of the revised Mathematics Program of Studies. During the 2008-09 school year, teachers and principals were invited to attend divisional math sessions, coaching sessions and principal sessions. Approximately 400 teachers and 150 principals attended M4A sessions. The Division 1 sessions had 175 participants from 122 different schools. The Division 2 sessions had 149 participants from 114 different schools. One hundred and four elementary schools have at least one numeracy coach attending the coaching sessions, with 10 schools choosing to fund a second coach through their school-based allocation. The Division 3 sessions had 55 participants from 41 different schools, with 26 of these schools sending at least one teacher to the coaching sessions as well.

The divisional sessions focused on creating awareness of the available supports regarding curriculum implementation and on facilitating conversations around the pedagogical shift suggested in the Program of Studies. Time was provided for teachers to share teaching materials at the divisional sessions; in addition, teachers were encouraged to use the M4A District Share SITE to share digital resources with one another. Also posted on the Share SITE were resources created by the math consultants to support the implementation of the revised Program of Studies.

Four half-day coaching sessions were offered in 2008-09. These sessions focused on coaching skills for teachers of mathematics and gaining clarity and understanding about the role in their schools. By including all three divisions in the coaching sessions, coaches were afforded the opportunity to have cross-divisional conversations about how students best learn mathematics. Coaches assumed various roles in their schools. Examples include but are not limited to: sharing information with colleagues at staff meetings; facilitating parent sessions around the revised Mathematics Program of Studies; modeling lessons in colleagues' classrooms; and organizing and ordering manipulatives to ensure all staff have materials they need to implement the revised Program of Studies. District math consultants also completed one "meta-coaching" (coaching the coach) visit to each of the schools involved in the initiative, resulting in enhanced leadership capacity in teaching mathematics. This work will be sustained and deepened throughout the current school year.

Principals of schools participating in the M4A initiative attended one full-day and one half-day inservice during the 2008-09 year. Principals were given opportunities to develop their understanding of the philosophy and rationale of the revised Program of Studies, explored options for supporting their teachers and discussed what they should be looking for in classrooms related to the implementation of the philosophy of the revised Program of Studies. Principals were also provided opportunities to discuss with colleagues what was working well related to supporting teachers in math instruction and where they felt they needed support. The majority of principals indicated that they were pleased with the implementation of the revised Program of Studies and with the changes they were observing in classrooms.

Overall, year one of the Math for All initiative has been well received. Student Assessment has analyzed District math data and there has been a slight increase in the percentage of students achieving a grade level of achievement in mathematics equal to or above their enrolment grade. Also, although the focus was on the implementation in Grades K, 1, 4 and 7, there was an increase in the percentage of students achieving both the acceptable standard and the standard of excellence on the Provincial Achievement Tests at Grades 3, 6 and 9.

The Math for All initiative continues in 2009-10 with 110 new teachers participating in Division 1, 90 new teachers in Division 2 and 23 new teachers in Division 3. These teachers join 112 returning teachers. Also, the 102 returning math coaches are joined by 29 new coaches. The great interest in year two of the initiative indicates that Math for All is serving the needs of schools and teachers implementing the revised Program of Studies.